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Polish Participation in the Armed Intervention and Stabilization Mission in Iraq

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MAIN THESES OF THE REPORT:

1. Participation in the Iraqi operation is the most controversial undertaking in Polish foreign and security policy during the last 15 years. It wasn't preceded by a sufficiently thorough analysis of profits and losses for foreign and domestic policy, or by justifications convincing the majority of citizens. These are some of the reasons why about 70 percent of the public are opposed to it. The fact that the use of the army in a complicated and dramatic situation such as the Iraqi mission, (that has already lasted over one and a half years) would have such clear domestic implications, was not appreciated.

2. For the political authorities the decision to support the USA in Iraq were arrived at by treating the United States as its main NATO ally and the final guarantor of security for Poland. A reasonable question however, is whether it was in the Polish interest to develop long term special relations with only one super - power, and if this would bring costs relative to its relations with other partners, especially those from the European Union. However, long term American presence in Europe; can counteract the resurgence of nationalist defense policies of the larger European countries, which are not in the Polish interest. An American defeat in Iraq would carry some negative consequences for Polish national security policy.

3. Engagement far distant from the borders of Poland indirectly brings security and prominence to our country, nevertheless, as in other countries; a question remains as to the legitimacy of using power.

4. The stabilization mission, which was handed over to Polish units based on the mandate of **government and the President**, has so far been handled (on the basis of the available information) unerringly, without diminishing the prestige of the state and army.

5. It is a pity that during the entire period of engagement in Iraq there has been no single coherent vision, comprehensible to the public as to the duration and scope of the presence of the Polish contingent in Iraq. This is a convincing reason for the extent of military engagement to depend on the progress of stabilization in Iraq. A sudden reversal would be irresponsible (unless a developing situation was to threaten soldiers' lives) and would arouse suspicion as to the intentions of such a decision. However, gradual withdrawal under stabilized conditions in Iraq, is desirable and rational both from the point of view of relations among allies in the so-called anti - Iraqi coalition, and the expectations of large part of Polish society. It is difficult

to say whether Polish politicians' statements in the second half of October 2004, (that is up to the moment of finalizing this report) indicate returning to the earlier formula, namely that the military presence in Iraq is determined by the current local situation, or whether the deadline of withdrawal -after the elections in Iraq planned for the beginning of the next year - will instead be defined ad hoc.

6. Participation in the "Iraqi Freedom" operation has yielded a great deal of valuable information regarding the operational abilities and organization of the military forces of many countries, portraying the developing tendencies of modern armies. Much of this information can be used in the course of the improvement and modernization of the Polish Army and is already being included in the program of development through the year 2010. Creating expeditionary forces will make things easier. Never before has Poland had command over such a large, multinational military formation as in the "Iraqi Freedom" mission and has never had this kind of opportunity to gain such valuable experience.

ISSUE OF A NATIONAL DIMENSION

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POLISH PRESENCE

We can conclude from the reactions of varied centers of opinion, that taking part in the Iraqi operation and participation in its next phases is probably the most controversial undertaking in Polish foreign and security policy during the last 15 years. Decisions regarding the participation of Polish armed forces in both stages of the Iraqi operation: first in armed intervention and then in the stabilization mission, came about (contrary to the statements of politicians) relatively quickly and easily. This opinion does not have to mean that both decisions did not relate in an important way to the entirety of Polish foreign and security policy. At least this is the way it first seemed.

One could conclude that for political authorities, decisions came first of all from the Polish commitment to co-operate with the United States which has been ever since our efforts to become a member of NATO, treated as our most important ally and the final guarantor of our safety. These decisions were a continuation of the pro-American attitude in the conflict between the transatlantic partners, expressed in the famous "letter of eight"¹ in January 2003. They had,

¹ "Europe and America Must Stand United", London, 30 January 2003, <http://number-10.gov.uk/output/page1405.asp/19.10.2004>.

it seemed, a strategic dimension. That political act, which the letter was recognized as, practically forecast the intervention in Iraq, referring to "transatlantic bonds" and also to weapons of mass destruction, which turned out to be one of reasons for the future intervention.

However more and more Polish observers notice that principle decisions were not preceded by a satisfactory public debate, including parliamentary debate, or by a deep analysis of profits and losses which would be the future consequences of the Iraqi operation for the foreign and domestic policy of Poland. Arguments "for" and "against" were brought up only after engagement in this action, and actually only after the first mortalities and the first political defeats. Also under the influence of external events, such as the acknowledgment by the USA, Great Britain and Australia, that they were mistaken in regards to Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction. But these incorrect assumptions affected Polish public opinion less than their disappointment, that support for USA didn't bring Poland measurable benefits. As many as 70 percent of Poles pointed this out, seeing the need to establish a connection between support for the USA and American help for our country.

For the year and a half since the beginning of the operation, the decision to participate in the Iraqi mission has not been contested by the majority of Poland's governmental and opposition authorities, parties represented in parliament, nor parties unrepresented in the parliament. Criticism of Polish participation first came from analysts, judging that the unequivocal declaration by Poland of support for America puts at risk our position in the European Union, and European foreign security and defense policy, which is only now beginning to be shaped. Disappointment is also being expressed that a declaration of support for American policy does not bring with it the expected benefits connected with trade and visa policy.

It was only later, when it became clear that engagement in Iraq is related not only to international policy but also very much to internal policy, that very basic questions were asked such as questions about the process of decision making and justifications for it. One of the best-known constitutionalists estimated (but not before August 2004), that *"the President of the Republic of Poland, the succeeding Prime Ministers, and the minister of foreign affairs have not managed so far to introduce justifications which are considered to be fully satisfactory. Because the months of our Iraqi "adventure" are passing and there is little sign of it coming to a happy conclusion, one should... ask questions about its justification and expect that answers*

would be given to Poles. Then he added that, *"the questions about the Polish presence in Iraq belong to these kinds of colloquial questions, which don't have to be meaningless merely because they come from a layman. The issue with which they are concerned with are matter of national importance"*²

Public opinion is becoming more and more opposed to Polish engagement in Iraq. That is why a plan for withdrawal of the Polish contingent became one of the foundations of the program of Prime Minister Marek Belka's government. The calendar was being prepared for reducing military presence, starting at the end January or the beginning of February 2005, which is the time of the planned elections and also the beginning of the fourth shift of the Polish contingent. Polish military participation in the stabilization mission was driven by a philosophy linking its scope mainly to the situation in Iraq itself. Meaning that military presence was dependent on the internal security and political stability of the former state of Saddam Hussein. Therefore it was difficult to rule out the possibility of enlarging the contingent.

Polish authorities were claiming instead that sudden or total withdrawal of the Polish contingent from Iraq, the contingent, which is the core of the multinational division under Polish command, would be irresponsible, and it would expose Iraq to serious destabilization.

The essential change in the perception of Polish participation in the stabilization operation came with a famous statement by the Minister of National Defense, Jerzy Szmajdziński³. In an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza* in October 2004 he gave - as the first government official - a "deadline" for withdrawal of the Polish contingent as December 2005, this being the expiration date of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1546⁴. In the above-mentioned interview Szmajdziński no longer linked Polish military presence with the situation in Iraq. *Gazeta Wyborcza* wrote: *"Now Szmajdziński tells us that withdrawal of units should not be dependent on the developing situation in Iraq"*. This statement further weakens the political agreement, which was already very fragile, over the purpose of keeping armed forces in Iraq for the goals of stabilization mission. This factor causes a deepening of differences between the Polish establishment and Polish society in regard to the various directions of foreign policy.

² Piotr Winczorek, "Why Did We Go There? Questions about Poland and Iraq" *Rzeczpospolita*, 12th of August 2004.

³ Interview "We Are Leaving", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4th of October 2004.

⁴ The Security Council, Resolution 1546, 8 June 2004, <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/381/16/PDF/N0438116.pdf?OpenElement/19.10.2003>

THREATS NEAR OR FAR?

From the perspective of the time that has passed since Poland first engaged in the Iraqi operation, the main arguments for involvement are the following:

Political and military engagement were understood to be, especially during the first phase, a long-term investment in the future security of the international community, including Poland. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz wrote in the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, that: *"We decided to participate in the war with terrorism not only because of our feeling of responsibility to an ally told us to - the value of which can not be overestimated - but first of all because of our conviction, that by participating in the coalition we contribute to the creation of a safe future."* And further: *"It would have been tragic if we had waited while understanding this- till the moment when terrorism caught up to us in our own land"*.

Since the beginning of the Iraqi operation, there has been a conviction that military engagement far beyond the borders of Poland brings us security. This argument does not convince everyone from a psychological or political stand point, and even less so from a military standpoint. It is about a belief, that participating in a coalition with the USA and other countries will give Poland a guarantee of security for the future. As regards the other issue, namely the conviction, that in the case of the necessity to defend our country, that an American ally or the North-Atlantic Alliance would come to the aid of Poland, the opinions are divided. The Minister of National Defense, Jerzy Szmajdziński, stressed that: *"Such is the soldier's fate that one should be ready to act not only within the borders of our country, but also far beyond it, for the world's security. The world's security is also security for Poland. And often preventing danger in its infancy costs considerably less than in a situation, in which we deal with a direct threat."*

When on the 6th of November 2003 the media released information about the first Polish mortality in Iraq, the then Prime Minister, Leszek Miller, visiting soldiers at their base, affirmed, that this fact would not influence the government's position in the matter of our presence in Iraq because - as he repeated - our participation in fighting terrorism is the fight for our own security. From that moment on, the government seemed determined to proceed with the military mission even in the most difficult situations caused by deaths of soldiers, civil workers, and journalists. Poland is one of the countries keeping its army in Iraq (Since the beginning of August 2004), who have announced that they will not negotiate with terrorists, kidnapers of hostages or those trying in this way to extort their withdrawal.

Therefore it seems, that one of the main arguments for participation in the Iraqi operation in both its phases was the declaration of its will to oppose terrorism - politically and militarily. It was assumed that this is about their commitment to defending the values of the democratic world, to which Poland belongs; doing it in such a way as to keep the "enemy" far away from Polish territory and to do so, if possible, with our own coalition, preferably with the USA and NATO.

Even during the most difficult moments of the Iraqi mission its purpose of fighting against Saddam Hussein's regime and terrorism, was not questioned. Doubts arose, however, when democratic values were mentioned, because it was believed that in a country outside of the Euro-Atlantic area and western civilization, it was not possible to introduce a democracy consistent with our understanding of this notion.

One of the primary motives of the American, British, Australian and Polish intervention was to "scare away" - in the example of Iraq - countries who represented a risk to the security of the western world, including economic security. With the same purpose the United States applied a highly controversial, (among the other transatlantic partners) "preventive strategy", together with a "pre-emptive strike". It is worth mentioning that before the intervention in Iraq, Syria was given a warning, which was so tough, that speculation arose as to the possibility of an attack on this country.

For quite a long time the weapons of mass destruction argument seemed credible to a majority of observers, especially because Prime Minister Leszek Miller, after meeting with American politicians in Washington, at the beginning of February last year, recognized that the suitable resolution of the Security Council, forbidding possession of weapons of mass destruction had been broken by Iraq, and that there was proof⁵. At a conference held at the National Defense Academy in December 2003, the then Vice Minister of National Defense, Andrzej Towpik stated that it was possible to theorize, that if not for the terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001, the dangers of Hussein's policy would have been seen so clear.⁶ *"In fact there was no doubt, that Hussein possessed chemical and bacteriological weapons"*. But at the same time the remark was made that the fundamental question was not the possession of weapons

⁵ Bartosz Węglarczyk, "Prime Minister Miller Visiting President Bush", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5th of February 2003.

⁶ Andrzej Towpik, "Political and Military Aspects of 'the Iraqi Freedom' Operation", in: "Iraqi Freedom' Operation", The Academy of National Defense, Warsaw 2003.

of mass destruction, but if there was a threat of their use.

This was a characteristic approach, showing – among other things - that Poland, wanting to implement a long term pro-American policy, sought justification. Probably the most forceful example of this approach was a statement by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski during a UN forum in January 2003, that weapons inspectors should still be given the opportunity to search for the WMD. Another example was - the army's attempt to prove that warheads with toxic substances were found in Iraq, although this could have been done with the intention of proving their existence by the Military Information Services in the face of criticism of their actions. However, the indicator, showing some doubts about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, was the President's statement in March of this year, that suggested that Poland was misled concerning their existence.

Vice Minister Towpik said that taking into account current situation in Iraq one should restrain oneself from strong opinions. He mentioned, however, the following possible consequences of the "Iraqi Freedom" operation; elimination of the threat of destabilization by Saddam Hussein's regime, discontinuation of "illegal" operations with the WMD, limitation of support for international terrorism; as well as directing a clear warning towards other countries conducting illegal operations with WMD and supporting terrorism, such as Iran, Syria and North Korea; having serious repercussions on the geopolitical situation in the Persian Gulf region and the Middle East.⁷

If we were to accept this statement as pointing at motives for the use of the army in the undertaking of the operation and as justification for Polish participation, then one should recognize, that one and a half years of armed intervention are not commensurate with these assumptions.

Some Polish analysts have pointed out at the beginning of the intervention in Iraq, that it could bring the international community closer to resolution of the arms control issue. They estimated that Libya would not be prone to accept control of its own arsenal, if not for the deterrent power used in the Persian Gulf. The successful end of intervention in Iraq – the introduction of order in public life according to the norms of civilized countries - could, according to only few opinions, contribute to stabilization in the whole region and the creation of a so called Bigger Middle East.

⁷ Therein

The majority of Polish analysts, however, have eventually advocated opposing arguments. They have argued - as Witold Waszczykowski from the Foreign Office said - that "dealing with Saddam Hussein did not reduce the wave of terrorist operations, and did increase the desire to obtain weapons of mass destruction"⁸. A commentator from the *Gazeta Wyborcza* was clear, writing in August this year, that: *"Iran has become a symbol of the defeat of the Bush administration plan for the Middle East. The country included in the "axis of evil" came out from Iraqi war strengthened, and America lost its influence among a considerable number of pro-western allies. Teheran is becoming more and more tough, because they are aware, that nobody in the USA or in Europe - is willing to take strong action in the Middle East today."*

IN AMERICAN OR POLISH INTEREST?

The approach to Polish engagement in the Iraqi mission, that was presented by officials during the first one and a half years, brought more and more questions, not only about the legitimacy of this operation, but first of all about Polish national interest and about the scope of our interests now and in the future.

"The Strategy of National Security of the Republic of Poland" accepted by the government on the 22nd of July 2003, soon after joining the action, says: *"Poland will continue its policy of commitment to the support of international peace and security, both on a regional and global scale. The expression of readiness to play a responsible international role is manifested by joining in the stabilization of Iraq (...). The size, organization and equipment of the armed forces will be constantly adapted to defense needs, the necessity of fulfilling international tasks as well as the socio-economic potential of the country."*⁹

As Roman Kuźniar, the head of the Institute for Strategic Studies at Warsaw University said in a magazine

article- today we do not need to protect our borders from our closest neighbors, so let's also prepare our army and other units for operations far beyond our country, where existing situations are threatening. Although threats appear from within, their sources are often far distant from our borders.

⁸ Witold Waszczykowski, "Preliminary Observations on the Results of the War in Iraq for International Security and Middle East Region", [The Consequences of the War in Iraq for Security of the Middle East](#), The Center for Eastern Studies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw 2003.

⁹ "The Strategy of National Security of Polish Republic", Warsaw, 22 July 2003r, www.bbn.gov.pl/19.10.2004.

Does Poland have strategic interests in distant parts of world? Does engagement far from our borders really diminish or, just the opposite, increase the risk of actions of a retaliatory character? Is the special character of our bond with the United States, indeed a real element of the Polish *raison d'etat*? Did Poland really become an important ally of the USA thanks to its support in the Iraqi campaign? Is there a relationship between Polish loyalty to the USA and the policy of this country in regards to the Middle East and American presence in Europe, including its bases (at least with a "skeletal" connection with anti - missile systems) on the Polish territory? Shouldn't Poland manifest its independence, and charge a high price for supporting the USA? Why can't we get more support and means from the United States for modernization of the Polish army? Is it in the Polish interest to build good long-term relations with only one super - power? To what extent will our engagement in Iraq will bring us useful experience for future European policy? This is a list of basic questions, which will keep reappearing for quite a long time.

President Aleksander Kwaśniewski said to the media: *"We bet on a strategic partnership with the United States, because without it we would surely be in a lot worse situation. However we bet on both America and Europe. It is our conviction that there is no dilemma here... Iraq caused some tensions, but this is only an episode in history"*.

In Polish policy regarding actions in Iraq attention initially was given to the idea, that the closer the co-operation with the USA the stronger the position of Poland internationally. For some time however, it has not been emphasized.

An issue has appeared during the discussions over the last several months, particularly with our European partners. In a speech given by during one of the conferences by Daniel Adam Rotfeld, the secretary of state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, his words sounded suspicious not only in the context of Polish participation in Iraqi operation: *"Europe ... needs Germany and France to take into account to a larger extent the position of the United States. American presence in Europe - from the Polish point of view - is not only essential for security reasons, but is a special guarantee, that a dangerous re-nationalization of defense policies will not happen in Europe."*¹⁰ Several pages earlier (not in the form of a transcript but rather an account) a yet more telling opinion was given. Namely a disagreement with the opinion of Aleksander Smolar,

¹⁰ Adam Daniel Rotfeld, "Comments on the Results of the War in Iraq", continued as in note nr 8.

the President of the Batory Foundation, stating that Poland is not prepared for an Iraqi mission, the Minister said: *"Poland has to act in its own national interest, which is forced by France, Germany and Russia's policy of nationalism. Poland supported the intervention in Iraq, taking into account new global threats demonstrated by the 11th of September as well as the fact, that its neighbors will not protect Polish interests, both in the context of the European Union, and in security issues."* This very opinion coming from the person, who is the unquestionable co-author of present Polish foreign policy, can shed light on the real motives behind Polish participation.

If this is how things are then an American defeat in Iraq would be also a great defeat for American allies in the national security arena, in this the loss of Poland would be greater than other American allies, for example Great Britain or Italy, bringing inevitable additional after-effects for European policy.

It is worth mentioning here one of the most controversial opinions expressing an alternate view which was published in the "Strategic Yearbook": *"The American maneuver to divide Europe on Iraqi was part of a bigger plan of "disintegrating" Europe, which was perceived, if united, as a growing competitor to America. A uniform and consistent position of the European Union as well as main countries joining it could probably hold Washington back from the war, of which the negative consequences for Europe were obvious. The lack of European unity resulted in the absence of even the smallest influence on the White House decisions in terms of Iraq. Not London, Madrid, nor Warsaw had an effect. This gave the Bush administration an impetus to disrespect, deride, and even attempt to punish those, who - like Paris or Berlin - tried to oppose: the war, breaking the law, or the disassembly of the UN Security Council system."*¹¹

Engagement in the Iraqi mission gave - and still gives - Poland a feeling, that it is an actor in an international arena and that it is an important entity. At the moment of joining the armed intervention - on the side of the United States, Great Britain and Australia - the element of a new identity seemed – next to fighting terrorism and credibility as an ally – to be a priority. With time, mainly as the result of tensions in transatlantic relations this feeling has started to fade. Warnings appeared that we should have reminded our allies about our importance, so that Washington would not start to treat us as someone not worth caring about.

¹¹ " The Polish Strategic Yearbook 2003/2004", Foundation for International Studies, Warsaw 2004

Some appealed to "international prestige" and "building a new image" of Poland in the world. The evidence of this new phenomenon which could be recognized as satisfaction with the acknowledgment of the Polish role by Americans (even if this was only our perception), were statements by both American and Polish politicians, including a metaphorical statement by the former head of the National Security Bureau at the Chancellery of the President of the Polish Republic, Marek Siwiec, who talked about Polish promotion to the "first league". Even now, coming up to the Presidential elections in the United States on the 2nd of November the Polish media (often critical towards the USA) are looking at the republican and democratic candidates from the perspective of whether they mention Poland, as an ally of America. Every western European leader's statement is criticized, if they question the Polish pro-American approach.

The main reservations that the Polish government seemed to have had to joining the intervention, but of less importance than the above arguments "for", was the issue of the legitimacy of using power. Nevertheless, according to press reports, the head of Foreign Affairs said that Poland would be ready to support, but only politically, the anti-Iraqi action, without a suitable resolution from the UN. On the subject of the use of power and the international legal aspects of such an act, disputes are taking place up to this day in all countries of the Euro-Atlantic region and elsewhere.

Summarizing, it can be concluded, that arguments given in Poland "for" the engagement of our country in the Iraqi operation could be divided into two categories. The first are of a general nature (opposing the dictatorship, protecting values, fighting terrorism, loyalty to the USA and the coalition led by them which are shared by all countries of the anti-Iraqi coalition. The second category is strictly connected with the security policy of Poland (belief in the USA as a guarantor of our security) and it is worth a separate analysis within the framework of a debate on the Polish *raison d'état*.

GREAT TEST

DECISIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE PRESIDENT

The decision to send a military contingent was made by the government in Warsaw in March 2003, when Iraq disregarded 14 successive resolutions of the UN Security Council, calling for disarmament. In the government announcement it was stressed: *"We perceive Polish*

participation in the operation as the realization of agreements between the heads of states and governments during the NATO Summit in Prague, regarding support for the implementation of resolution 1441."¹²

The issue of the legal basis of an armed intervention in Iraq appeared again in the middle of September 2004, as a result of a statement by the UN Secretary General, Koffi Annan, who during a television interview characterized it as "illegal". Poland, in the same manner as Great Britain and Australia, stated in the announcement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that *"it should be recognized, that decisions, that were undertaken by the international community in Iraq, had legal basis."*¹³

On the proposal of the Council of Ministers, the President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, decided on the 17th of March 2003, that a Polish Military Contingent would join the forces of the international coalition *"to contribute to the enforcement of resolution No. 1441 of the UN Security Council by Iraq as well earlier resolutions related to it"*¹⁴. The President told the media at that time: *"If you ask me if I am for war or peace, I will answer that I stand for peace. If you ask whether we should risk the lives of Polish soldiers, even to a limited extent, I also have doubts. But if you were to ask me and our countrymen if they want to provide security for Poland and freedom from the threat of terrorism, I am convinced that the great majority would answer that they want the security"*.

The government, referring to Iraq's failure to submit to the United Nations resolution, in the matter of weapons of mass destruction, according to its own statement to the public, made a difficult decision. In the announcement there was a statement that Poland recognizes the use of force in international relations as an *"absolute last resort"*. If Iraq's disarmament were not to be implemented - they argued - it would be both a political and a military mistake, as well as illegal. The authority of the UN would suffer. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the use of force against Iraq was possible on basis of three resolutions: No. 678 in 1990, No. 687 in 1991 and No. 1441 in 2002.¹⁵

¹² Position of the Council of Ministers, in relation to the proposal for the President of Polish Republic to issue a decision concerning the use of Polish Military Contingent in the Make-up of the International Military Coalition forcing the compliance of Iraq with the UN Security Council Resolution. Warsaw, 17th of March 2003 http://www.kprm.gov.pl/2130_8934.htm / 19.10.2004.

¹³ According to press reports

¹⁴ As in note 12

¹⁵ The Security Council: Resolution 678, 29 November 1990, <http://www.iraqwatch.org/un/>

The decision to join the Iraqi operation was in majority supported by the opposition represented at the parliament by Civil Platform and Law and Justice parties. It seems, that this attitude – aside from political motives - was motivated by the hope for economic benefits in a two ways: those resulting from closer relations with the United States as well as those resulting from the future reconstruction of Iraq (in co-operation with the USA or aside from the bilateral relations). The nomination of Marek Belka for the position of Director for Economic Policy in the Coalition Provisional Authority strengthened these hopes. The situation looked likewise when the Americans tried to reward their loyal allies, promising contracts in a post-war reconstruction of Iraq (which led to conflicts with the European Union, because of the discrepancy between such moves and the principles of free trade, leading to the abandonment of the original plan).

During the parliamentary debate at the beginning of April last year – the first one concentrating on the Iraqi mission - 328 Members of Parliament expressed their opinion "for" Polish engagement in the Iraqi operation , 71 - against it. Jan Olszewski from the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland and the ex-Prime Minister said: *"Making decisions without the opinion of the Polish parliament belittles the position of Poland at such a difficult time. It should be the decision of the parliament, government and the President. The basis of our security was - and still continues to be - the Northatlantic Treaty."* Both houses of the parliament, tried to gain a greater influence on the decision making process in the Iraqi issue, but they were unsuccessful. Initiatives stayed in hands of the government and its members as well as the President, according to the Constitution. This approach guaranteed quicker and more effective decisions. However parliamentarians played a substantial direct role, inspecting the Polish contingent in the field.

MANDATES AND TASKS

The mandate of the Polish Military Contingent, that is intervention forces, stated that it can consist of a maximum of 200 soldiers meaning a 56 -person sub-unit of the Operational and Mobile Reconnaissance Group (GROM), supported by a 24 - person naval group, which earlier participated in operation **"Lasting Freedom"** (fulfilling the task of controlling naval units); 74-

unsresolutions/s-res-678.htm/19.10.2004, Resolution 687, 3 April 1991,
<http://www.fas.org/news/un/iraq/sres/sres0687.htm/> 19.10.2004, Resolution 1441, 8 November 2002,
<http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/682/26/PDF/N0268226.pdf?OpenElement/19.10.2003>.

people strengthened platoon responsible for decontamination (from the 4th. Chemical Regiment); multitask logistic support ship "Konradmiral X. Czernicki" with 53 – crew members, residing in the Persian Gulf for over half a year at that time (supplying American ships of the 5th Fleet).

All who were sent to the operation were professional soldiers. Despite the fact that according to the Bill of the 17th of December 1998¹⁶ it was possible to order them, but an exception was made (again) and they were asked whether they would agree to go (this is no longer happening). Refusal did not entail any formal consequences.

Soldiers were given special training on how to stay safe in dangerous situations, on the operational methods of local resistance and terrorist organizations, what safe correspondence should look like, and how not to engage in political discussions with strangers. They were acquainted with Iraqi realities.

Units were placed under American and coalition command. Operational tasks were shared with the General Headquarters of Polish Army, in which the coordinating team was created. National command belonged to the Minister of Defense.¹⁷ At the same time Polish Authorities gave American units heading to Iraq area, permission to use Polish air space as well as land transit. The permission was initially granted for the period between the 19th of March and 15th of September 2003. The range of the operation was defined as follows: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq as well as Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Politicians reserved the right that Polish soldiers would not be used on the front lines. Their tasks became officially defined as: limited special tasks, mainly logistics and support for the operations of coalition armies (the then Prime Minister Leszek Miller characterized it as *"measured to the abilities of our military capabilities"*).

A considerable surprise was caused by the willingness to offer Poland command over one of the stabilization zones in Iraq. In March 2003 the possible plan to send a stabilization contingent by Poland was denied, and also denied by the minister of national defense, because

¹⁶ Dz. Ust. 1998 No. 162 item no. 1117 the law dated 17th of December 1998 about the principles of use or residence of the Polish Republic Armed Forces beyond the borders of the country.

¹⁷ Operation „Iraqi Freedom”, The Academy of National Defense, Warsaw 2003

"it would have a negative influence on the finances of the department". " I will not encourage the government to do so" - the chief of national defense said. A month later he said in the military weekly magazine " Armed Poland", that "we would decide in favor of this, if the costs of sending and keeping Polish soldiers are not borne by Poland." At that point, we can suppose the matter of sending the contingent was practically settled. The Minister's opinion was symptomatic. It had two addressees: the USA as a "sponsor" of this action. It was possible to undertake this action if the army division could be assembled and transported. It was communicated to the other addressee, Polish public opinion, that participation in the mission would not bring with it great costs. In 2003 Americans covered half of the costs of the upkeep of the Polish contingent, including covering almost all costs of the transportation of the entire division; by the end of 2004 they will have spent between \$350 and \$400 million dollars for this, they are going to supply 217 all-terrain vehicles, (9 of the Hummer type) as well as 6 used C - 130 Hercules. Recently there are also discussions about unmanned aerial vehicles.¹⁸

Germany and Denmark refused at that time the Polish proposal of a shared command over the just marked out new stabilization zone. It was the Polish intention to send to Iraq the North-East Corps from Szczecin. Difficulties were created by this proposal (the Minister of Defense talked publicly about this possibility, before both governments took stands on this issue) and they deepened the differences of opinions between Poland and Germany especially on the issue of the engagement in Iraq.

THE PRICE OF STABILIZATION

The second phase of Polish participation in the Iraqi operation began under the motto of stabilization of the situation in this country. The basis of participation in the stabilization mission was established by the UN Security Council resolution No. 1483¹⁹ from May of 2003, that is three weeks after the formal announced by the President of United States, George W. Bush (1st of May) about the end of war operations. On the 21st of May, the North Atlantic Council declared, however, that NATO would not be participating in the stabilization mission in Iraq. Poland could, however, expect help in preparing plans for governing the zone. Poland - as it seems - wanted to appeal to the entire Alliance, having hopes that it would contribute to its renewed consolidation and Poland will benefit from this. First it turned with a request to Spain to

¹⁸ Data from current specialized publications

¹⁹ The Security Council, Resolution 1483, 22 May 2003, <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/368/53/PDF/N0336853.pdf?OpenElement/19.10.2004>.

share the experience of creating the command operations and creating contacts between national contingents.

NATO was officially asked for support in individual engagement in the stabilization mission on the 15th of May 2003: - *"It is a normal and natural situation that the Polish side has asked the allied countries, to join in on informal talks on the subject of the possible use of assets administered by the Alliance"* - commented Jerzy Szmajdziński in an interview with "Armed Poland". Poland was interested in help in creating operating plans, co-ordinating communication systems, and also sharing allied intelligence (in similar manner to NATO's approach in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan). During a special meeting devoted to the access to the resources of the Alliance, which took place in Warsaw on the 28th of May 2003, Poland asked about the right to use the databases of the Alliance, which contain the intelligence research information about the area of operation; advice on logistics issues, programming and assembling forces; and help from the Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) in supplying armies within the responsibility zone. An acceptable decision no the matter was reached on the 2nd of June, 2003.

How much Poland wanted to use NATO's help, and the extent to which this was more than what was given, is exemplified by the statement of the representative of the National Security Bureau, that one should suppose that direct participation of NATO in the international stabilization forces is *"inevitable"*. Immediately after the NATO summit in Istanbul at the end of June the decision on training of the Iraqi forces was described as insufficient. The head of Foreign Affairs, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz declared that Poland saw the need for greater involvement of the Alliance than just the training of army and police. The spokesman of Foreign Affairs Ministry, Bogusław Majewski told *Rzeczpospolita* at the beginning of July this year that: *"We would want NATO to take over part of the responsibility for the future stabilization of Iraq, as in Afghanistan, together with the engagement of the allied structures"*. Meanwhile the head of the Ministry of National Defense affirmed, that *"as far as the Iraqi issue, I think that the Allied declaration in regards to help in the training of local security forces was all, that it was possible to get."*²⁰ Poles assume, that thanks to the help of NATO among others, by the end of 2005 there will be an 80 thousand man Iraqi army, with a decent level of training and equipment.

²⁰ Statement during the conference of **the Euro - Atlantic Association (www.sea-ngo.org)**, "Obligations towards NATO", 22 July 2004.

The decision to participate in the stabilization forces was signed on the 6th of June 2003 by the President for the period between the 9th of June and 31st of December, with the possibility of extending it, first for a year, and then for further 6-months periods. The rotation of units was established at the beginning, and depended mainly on Ground Forces as one of the three (with the air forces and navy) types of armed forces. It was decided to leave the military component in place, (it was taking part in purely military intervention) later withdrawing the logistics vessel "Czernicki". The core of the Polish division numbering 2350 soldiers in the first round, (from the 31st of July 2003) were from the 12th Mechanized Division. Poles formally took over their zone on the 3rd of September.

The second shift of the Polish contingent arrived in the middle of January 2004. It consisted of 2440 soldiers coming in larger extent than before from operational units. Voluntary professional soldiers were able to join the mission.

The tasks of the stabilization forces included: creating security and public order, helping to create the instruments of power, ending terrorist threats, protection of places of cultural and religious heritage, protecting territorial integrity, help for humanitarian organizations, (In Iraq Poland provides policemen and Border Guards as well).



"IRAQI FREEDOM" Operation

Polish forces in Iraq

Number of soldiers: 2400

The commander of Multinational South-Central Division: divisional gen. Andrzej Ekiert

Bases:

Babylon near Hilli:

Polish command battalion

Polish mechanized battalion from the Swietoszow-based 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade

Company from the 1st Special Regiment from Lubliniec

In Kut:

The independent Air - Assault Group from the 25th Brigade of Aerial Cavalry based in Tomaszow Mazowiecki (under the direct command of divisional commander)

The command of division: brig. Gen. Jerzy Wójcik

Polish battalion of command from Bydgoszcz

In Karbala:

Polish engineering company

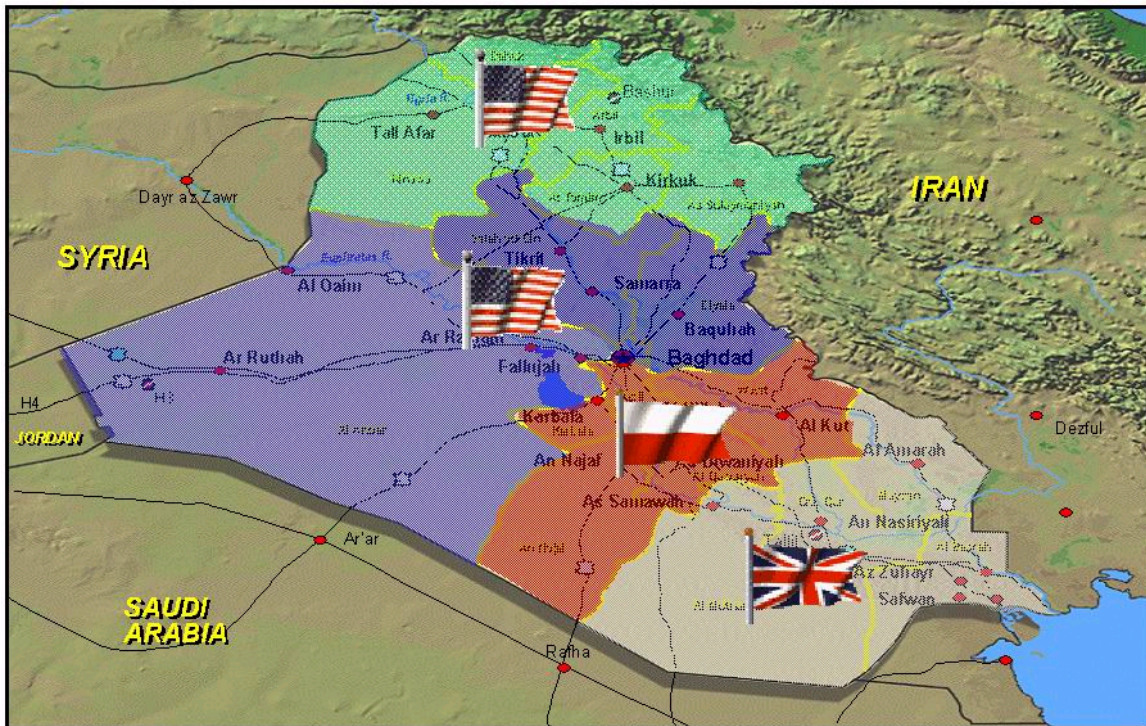
Polish medical platoon

In Hilli (Babil province):

Operational Battalion SHIRBRIG from Szczecin

Logistic battalion from Opole

The III shift sent to Iraq in August 2004 is based on the 16th Division from Elbląg.



The zone is inhabited by 3 million 200 thousand Iraqis. It consists mainly of Arabs, but also tribal population and Bedouins. The area of the responsibility zone: about. 29 thousand sq. km.

PROVINCES

Babil with the capital in Hilli - 618 thousand inhabitants

Karbala, with the capital of the same name - 542 thousand

Wasit with the capital in Kut city - 374 thousand

(Provinces taken over by American forces :

Najaf with the capital of the same name - 522 thousand

Kadisiya with the capital in Diwanji - 200 thousand)

Source: The Ministry of National Defense

The zone of responsibility of the multinational division under Polish command was initially the same with administrative borders of Iraqi provinces (Muhafazat): Babylon, Karbala, Najaf, Kadisiya, and Wasit, from the border with Saudi Arabia to the border with Iran. In this area there are six large cities, of this: Karbala and Nadzaf, which are holy places for Shiites. Beginning on the 27th of May 2004 the zone of responsibility got smaller by two provinces, as a result

of the withdrawal of Spanish, Honduran and Dominican forces. It decreased from 8.5 thousand sq. km to 6 thousand sq. km. It now consists 17 countries down from 25. Later the Filipinos, and then the Thais withdrew.

After the 9th of August the Polish commander controlled only three provinces: Babil, Karbala and Wasit, passing control of the remaining provinces, in which Al-Sadr's armed supporters rose up, to the command of the Americans.

The "black series" occurred for Poles in the second half of August. Iraqi partisans, attacking Poles, tried to involve them in internal fights in Iraq. Polish soldiers got killed. The number of deaths from the beginning of the mission to the 15th of October 2004 reached about 15 Polish citizens, mainly soldiers. By March 2005 (the deadline is secret, but they have been moving since Fall) the Multinational South-Central Division will no longer have its command in Babylon (in order to protect monuments of this ancient city, as there have been past conflicts around this issue). The new place of residence (also for the Polish-Bulgarian brigade from Karbala) will be Diwanija, which also offers better security conditions for soldiers. The transportation of people and equipment is taking place escorted by the Americans. Together with the transfer of command there will also be an exchange of Iraqi provinces controlled up to this point by Poles; giving over Karbala and taking over Kadisiji.

AN OVERVIEW OF POSSIBILITIES

Already by the 23rd of July 2003 the head of the Defense Ministry had ordered an analysis of the possible long-lasting participation of the Polish military in Iraqi mission. For the analysts this instruction could have meant that he had started reviewing the possibilities and abilities of the Polish army in the face of a new challenge. However - as is understandable - the concrete operating possibilities of Polish Army are not publicly discussed. Without going into details two main aspects are known: difficulties with assembling the contingents in the face of a lack of sufficiently prepared, efficient and well equipped units and on the other hand correctly executing existing tasks. This second aspect is especially difficult to verify.

Considerably more attention is given to the "style" of mission in which Poles participate. The principle that multinational division under Polish command does not take part in offensive but only defensive actions is stressed and that it does not execute tasks on the front line, but rather stabilization tasks. The 1st Deputy of the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed

Forces, army general Mieczysław Cieniuch, stressed that Poles independently lead only operations connected with self-defense.

It is worth mentioning a quote illustrating this problem from a fragment of a statement given by Gen. Mieczysław Bieniek, the commander of the second shift of the multinational division, from an interview in "Armed Poland" given after his return. The journalist's question was: How is the division mandate related to Iraqi reality? Answer: *"The division initially consisting of 23 and later 17 national contingents went to participate in the stabilization mission, and against its will, due to the rise of Muqtad al-Sadr's militia and the attacks of his supporters, suddenly found itself in the middle of a home war. At some point in Karbala, Najaf and Al. Kut as well as on the supply lines we had open fronts of cruel battles which did not correspond to any mandates. Our law and equipment did not allow us to lead offensive actions. What was I supposed to do in this situation? Let our soldiers being killed? - To Ask Americans, who had a suitable equipment, and an appropriate strong mandate, to supporting us... - That is what I did! But we can't do it all with the allies hands. We also have to prove ourselves. Each contingent, including the Filipinos, who never opened fire on anyone, had its own self-defense principles, stating that as long as we are not attacked, we will not attack anybody."*²¹

The deaths of Polish soldiers and incidents dangerous to the security of the Polish camps (like the one at the end of August 2003 when after several minutes of being fired upon we could not return fire) brought about discussions about changing tactics and the improvement of the condition of our contingent's equipment, in order not to cross the borders of necessary defense and to assure the right to counter-attack. The contingent was prepared for - let's remember - not for fighting but for participation in stabilization operations. That is why right from the start the decision was made not to send heavy armored equipment to Iraq. Deputy of the head of staff of the Ground Forces, brig. gen. Włodzimierz Michalski, responsible for the Iraqi operation estimated, that greater attention than before should be focused on deterrent actions consisting of demonstrating the new armament, equipment, and operational conceptions. New defensive possibilities – the general said - will be created thanks to the additional means for fighting and reconnaissance, such as the MI -24 helicopters or balloon reconnaissance devices, improved communication systems, delivery of the armored "Scorpion" honkers.

The change of operating conditions in the Polish responsibility zone was caused by

²¹ "Armed Poland", No. 33, Warsaw 2004

the radicalization of attitudes among the Shiite population. The attacks on bases, convoys and patrols gave birth to a call for the change of tactics of response. In place of response - gen. Koziej commented - it was suggested that we act pre-emptively. In accordance with the decision of the Prime Minister Marek Belka, over which there was practically no political discussion until the memorable announcement of minister Szmajdziński at the beginning of October, that the Polish contingent was to be reduced at the beginning of the 2005 to most probably 1500 soldiers, concentrated in several larger and safer bases. It would also stop patrolling the Iraqi cities and limit the tasks to necessary interventions. According to gen. Czesław Piątas, the of head of Staff of the Polish Army Headquarters, decreasing military presence should depend on the ability of Iraqi services to operate independently.²² This statement showed, (which is how it may have seemed for a long time) the second essential foundation which was taken in consideration while maintaining the military presence by the Euphrates, which is to remain there till the moment when at least relative control over security and stability, could be taken over by Iraqi security forces. Until September 2004 the conception of a complete withdrawal of Polish forces from Iraq (at least this was the assurance) most probably did not exist. Only the operation of limiting of the Polish contingent was mentioned, which, according to the words of the head of General Headquarters, depended on the "development of situation in Iraq" and "improvement of Iraqi security forces". On this issue, according to assurances, consultations were held with allies as well as various participants of the international division, operating in Iraq under the Polish command.

The accounting of General Headquarters did not exclude, however, keeping logistic, sapper, engineering and security units, and others responsible for contacts with local population in Iraq. At the same time, in Poland, there would be a special reserve of operating forces, ready to be transferred to the place of action, if the situation in Iraq were to deteriorate. The equipment, which was going to be left as a gift to the Iraqis, would be at our disposal in the location of operations. It should be asked however if a thorough economic calculation will be conducted in this regard.

As far as the length of the presence of Polish forces in Iraq, the present government - which has been in power since the 2nd of May 2004 - is not consistent. The Labor Union Party expressed a different position. The postulate of this party - on the withdrawal of the army was submitted by a chairwoman and also vice-Prime Minister, Izabella Jaruga – Nowacka. It remained for quite

²² Press conference introduced in media on the 8th of July 2004.

a long time without any larger influence, in the face of agreement between government and President, as to leaving the Polish contingent in Iraq, basically as long as it will be needed. The impulse to change this approach was initiated by an appeal concerning the withdrawal of the Polish soldiers, by the chairman of the Polish Peasant Party, Janusz Wojciechowski. He announced his intention to collect signatures for an appeal, not specifying when this demand would have to be fulfilled. It was already the spring of 2004 when the leaders of the Polish Peasant Party claimed, that the present third shift of Polish forces in Iraq should be the last one. The chairman of party claimed during an annual celebration of the Peasant Action Holiday in the Sanctuary of the Sorrowful Queen of Poland in Kałków - Godów (świętokrzyskie district), that the war in Iraq does not serve the interests of Poland, but rather those of the USA. The League of Polish Families picked up the slogan of the Polish Peasant Party immediately, however they did not support the appeal of the Polish Peasant Party, demanding instead a referendum on the subject of keeping the army in Iraq.

Still at the end of August the minister of national defense claimed that Poland should execute its mission *"to the end"*, though limiting the size of the contingent. When his opinion changed, suggesting that Poles should leave Iraq no matter what the situation in the country is, it was remembered that independent from the pressure of the Polish Peasant Party, the League of the Polish Families and self-defense Parties, the Labor Union Party had wanted an exit from Iraq since fall. The statement of Jerzy Szmajdziński was made 10 days before the expected vote of confidence in the government.

Admitting, that *"our possible decision about the immediate removal of our armies could... cause a domino effect"*, the head of the Ministry of Defense, affirmed, that the *"deadline"* for the complete withdrawal of the Polish contingent should be the *"date of expiration of the UN Security Council resolution No. 1546."*²³ *This should also be the deadline for removal of our armies. This obviously does not mean, that if our stabilization mission were to be continued, the Polish army would withdraw from Iraq completely. Surely some group of observers would remain. For this however another UN Security Council resolution would be necessary".* He further stated: *"Except for the fact that expiration of the UN resolution is essential, yet another factor is important. This regards what is called our military abilities. It does not mean that our supplies are ending, but two and a half years of a mission in such difficult conditions is a lot*

²³ The Security Council, Resolution 1546, 8 June 2004, <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/381/16/PDF/N0438116.pdf?OpenElement/19.10.2003>.

for the army, which really just attains new abilities and introduces new equipment ".

Despite the varied, generally critical reactions to the statement mentioned above, (which was not discussed with the Prime Minister or the head of Foreign Affairs) it opens a door to a new approach to the Iraqi issue both in domestic and foreign policy. as well as altering the previously existing approach. The option of withdrawing may satisfy the critics of a prolonged, (in their opinion) military presence in Iraq, but surely it also has an implied meaning connected with the pre-election political party game . On the international scale it can open up new options.

However after the meeting of the heads of the defense departments of coalition countries (including Iraq, Bahrain and Qatar), which took place on the " USS John F. Kennedy" aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf (during the period between the statement of Jerzy Szmajdziński and the expected government declaration by the Prime Minister during the parliamentary debate on the 15th of October 2004) the minister talked only about a "*decrease*" in the stabilization forces contingent.

This was also the perspective sketched by Prime Minister Marek Belka in his opening speech, supporting the intention to reduce the contingent, without announcing a date for withdrawal: "*We will not stay in Iraq an hour longer than reason dictates.*"²⁴ None of the statements of the Prime Minister suggest, whether the above declaration means returning to the previous form of engagement, assuming that military presence in Iraq is dependent on the situation in the country. The deadline of withdrawal - after the parliamentary elections in Iraq planned for January 2005 - also remains unclear. It would also be difficult to conclude from the later statement of the head of Foreign Affairs, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, to what extent Poles would be present in Iraq. He affirmed, according to the Polish Press Agency, that "*after the elections we would like to start reducing the size of our army in Iraq. However, understanding our duties, we will have to judge the situation in this country .*"

In all statements from the middle of October 2004, by the President, prime minister and both ministers, one common element emerges; not making the decision depend on the USA, at least directly, although all politicians could take in account the unknown results of the presidential elections on the 2nd November and the unclear American policy in the Middle East.

²⁴ Pronouncement at Lower house of parliament of Prime Minister Marek Belka before the vote of confidence

VALUABLE EXPERIENCES

The plan for the development of the armed forces for the years 2003-2008 did not imply a reduction in the size of the Polish army or a change of structures. It included, however, improvement of operating abilities and the military potential based on national defense strategy as well as the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) of November 2002. The "Program 2003 - 2008" was an answer to changes in the security environment, including new threats, first of all terrorism as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of their transport, but without reference to practical situations, with which the Polish units were confronted during Iraqi mission. (The plans were prepared gradually, according to a "step by step" formula, so that some elements could be gradually implemented). Lessons from Iraq are to be considered in the plan for the development of the armed forces for 2005 -2010.

According to all accessible military sources²⁵ the experiences gathered in the course of the Iraqi mission proved to be valuable hints for the organization and modernization of the national armed forces. The "Iraqi Freedom" operation delivered information about military abilities and the organization of armed forces - both of Iraq and the coalition, showing the propensities of modern armies. Not all experiences were used in development because not all of them are worth using

These experiences could be divided into two categories:

First are the universal experiences, which could and should be used in organizing the expeditionary missions of the new type, not only by Poland. The second one including conclusions for the Polish armed forces (and the distinction between the two should be flexible). It is concerned with conclusions arrived at from practical experience during logistical operations, which in the case of Poland was unprecedented: replacement of a 5 thousand person contingent using 22 airplanes going back and fourth (80-90 kg per man and additionally 60-70 kg of baggage) a distance of almost 4.5 thousand kilometers, with some support from civilian companies. It turned out that Poland needs a means of strategic transportation as well as better base for the transfer of armies to the place of operations. In command battalions the creation of security companies was indicated.

Warsaw 15 October 2004 r., www.kprm.gov.pl/1433_12416.htm/20.10.2004

²⁵ Publishing house of the Academy of National Defense, "Difficult stabilization", Warsaw 2004.

The experiences regarding the type and quality of equipment were gained gradually. And so the third shift (that is the contingent residing in the place of operation in the second half of 2004) was better equipped with night - vision and communication devices, and now the armored honkers "Scorpions" are being delivered .

In Poland the conviction seems to prevail that it is proper to participate in the widest coalition of countries. Because of that interactions are valued, as well as the ability to command large multinational formations on the level of brigades and sub-units. Command, managing and planning on the strategic level play very important roles but in the conditions of a modern battlefield the lowest levels of command become more important. Probably the most valuable experience acquired in Iraq is the skill of commanding a large military formation, considerably larger than during earlier peace missions conducted by the Polish Army.

The command of the multinational division under Polish command consisted at a certain point of 356 people from 25 countries. Div. Gen. (now army gen.) Mieczysław Bieniek, who was the commander during the second shift affirmed with pride, that: *"In some sense a multinational division is a perfect creature. There is no other institution like this in the world, our multinationality makes us almost perfect"*. However, this politically correct and attractive thesis is by many considered controversial. (It would be enough to trace the discussion on this subject, about creating European military forces).

Furthermore - as the available accounts suggest -there is a need for strengthening the logistics of maneuvers, creating a third hospital for the peace mission, improvement of the systems of command, so that they allow command over joint operations in real time, and more flexible battalions, from which it would be possible to create smaller modules for the support of other battalions.

Crucial military, but also political abilities could be achieved by increasing the ability to lead intelligence, reconaissance as well as counter - espionage actions both for the achievement of the political aims or of military operations. It would also be beneficial for the decision making process during army operations, for example in anti-missile and anti-aircraft defense systems as well as detection of their sources. The head of Military Information Services, gen. Marek Dukaczewski admitted, that *"despite the success of operations in many areas of intelligence*

activity" "*considerable problems*" appeared.²⁶ This issue has exceptional political meaning for the future, as it relates to minimizing the risk of going into action based only on foreign information, even if it is introduced by a country creating an alliance or a "volunteer coalition", as in the case of Iraq.

The operations of a military character as well as the mission of enforcing peace in Iraq unambiguously showed, (according to the analysts observing its development) that it was necessary to be prepared for action with the use light forces (which was confirmed by earlier research and is consistent with the principles of the future missions). That is: all agree, that the main challenge for the Polish armed forces in the light of the Iraqi experience is a gradual preparation of expeditionary forces, which would be possible to be moved easily into regions of conflict.

In accordance with the ideas of the commanders, including the commander of air forces, army gen. Ryszard Olszewski, Ph.D., it would be good to reach to a certain degree the ability to accomplish missions beyond our borders. It would also be beneficial to gain the information necessary for operations during the day and at night, to initiate modern systems of offensive and defensive equipment including unmanned aerial vehicles as well as centers of electronic warfare; to modernize the systems of reconnaissance and identification, to be ready for full cooperation with the AWACS system; and development of a program of re-fueling in the air.

The air force decided to take steps to better protect Polish aircraft, helicopters and other machines operating outside the borders of Poland, and to train staff which would be able to join multinational units maintaining airports, used for, among other things, supplying military units.

Ground forces as the main source of soldiers for peace missions of different types, are led in their development mainly by the NATO decisions for preparing 40 percent of the forces needed for expeditionary missions. 8 percent of the forces had to be designed for immediate response. For the commander of Ground Forces, army gen. Edward Pietrzyk the war in Iraq was a "clash of commanders, squads, platoons, companies and battalions", but not wanting to diminish the role of command and planning on the strategic level, we should be aware, that *"in the terrible dynamics of operations of the present battlefield the final role is given to the lowest levels of command"*.

²⁶ " Scientific Notebooks", No.4, Academy of National Defense, Warsaw, 2003.

It is widely recognized that the growing role of forces and special operations showing the ability of quick response in situations, when for various reasons: organizational, technical, or political - use of other components of the armed forces are not possible or advisable.

In the Main Headquarters of the Polish Army the work of creating the Joint Operation Command (the Operating Command) was speeded up. Reading the materials published after different conferences one could conclude that among Polish strategists there is a shared opinion that the "Iraqi Freedom" operation was a good example of command over a joint allied operation. The command will begin functioning on the 1st of July 2005 and will be responsible for controlling all Polish contingents residing outside of its borders. It will be responsible for the so-called "conferences for the generation of forces".

PUBLIC OPINION - IN MAJORITY OPPOSED

- In the middle of March 2003, that is in the moment of undertaking crucial decisions about Polish participation in Iraqi mission as well as before the first parliamentary debate - according to. OBOP (Public Opinion Research Center) - 69 percent of Poles were against sending the army into the Iraqi region, 21 percent supported such a step. But, according to. "Gazeta Wyborcza" (18th of March) even the opponents agreed that it was proper, however, to send support units, to the back lines.

- The death of the first Pole lieutenant colonel Hieronim Kupczyk from the 12th Mechanized Division, during the Iraqi mission took place on the 6th of November 2003. It was also the first case of direct deadly fire in the over 50 year history of Polish participation in peace missions. In December 2003 a lack of acceptance was observed among 67 percent of Poles, according to the CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center), and at the same time the support decreased from 37 to 28 percent. According to every third person in the face of intensifying attacks against soldiers and civil workers, the coalition countries should withdraw their armies. 19 percent believed, however, that stabilization forces should be strengthened. Three fourths of Poles estimated that Poland could become the aim of terrorist attacks, and only 18 percent were not afraid of that.

- In first half of August 2004, according to the CBOS polls, almost two thirds of Poles wanted the soldiers to come back home as soon as possible. One third supported leaving them in Iraq. The poll was conducted before the series of the tragic deaths and the escalation of Sadrs

supporters. 81 percent of Poles recognized the terrorist threat as real, and for 13 percent it was not a problem.

- According to the CBOS polls conducted at the beginning of October, the number of people opposed to the participation of the Polish armies in the stabilization mission grew about 4 percent in comparison with September, however the percentage of Poles supporting the operation decreased - from 40 to 37percent.

- A steady component is high support of Iraqi mission among people sympathizing with Civil Platform as well as Justice and Law parties, among educated people who are interested in politics. The strongest opponents of Polish presence in Iraq are people connected with the League of Polish Families.

Center for International Relations

WHO WE ARE?

The Center for International Relations (CIR) is an independent, non-governmental establishment dedicated to the study of Polish foreign policy as well as those international political issues, which are of crucial importance to Poland. The Center's primary objective is to offer political counselling, to describe Poland's current international situation, and to continuously monitor the government's foreign policy moves. The CIR prepares reports and analyses, holds conferences and seminars, publishes books and articles, carries out research projects and supports working groups. Over the last few years, we have succeeded in attracting a number of experts, who today cooperate with the CIR on a regular basis. Also, we have built up a forum for foreign policy debate for politicians, MPs, civil servants, local government officials, journalists, academics, students and representatives of other NGOs. The CIR is strongly convinced that, given the foreign policy challenges Poland is facing today, it ought to support public debates on international issues in Poland.

The founder and president of the Center for International Relations is Mr Janusz Reiter.

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